

Engaging Fathers and Promoting Healthy Parental Relationships in Home Visiting

Haji Shearer
Director of the Fatherhood Initiative
Massachusetts Children's Trust Fund



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Objectives

1. Identify the evidence that our father engagement model is based on.
2. Share some materials created for the program.
3. Describe the FITS model of father involvement in Healthy Families Mass.
4. Discuss some outcomes from the FITS model.



Evidence Base

- Started broadly with regional trainings for all programs providing research on importance of responsible fathers. (see examples)
- Revised Core Training that all new staff receive to include fathers and co-parenting in all elements and specifically address the needs of benefits of dads in one dedicated section (about 9% of 6 day training).



Benefits for children



- Less impulsivity; greater tolerance for stress
- Enter school more patient, curious and confident
- Fewer behavior problems in boys
- Girls tend to be happier, more willing to try new things
- Greater empathy



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Benefits for mom



- Mothers feel more secure, patient and flexible when supported by partner
- Strongest predictor of breastfeeding is partner support
- Involved fathers improve economic status of family
- Healthy fathering honors motherhood



Benefits for dad

- Can learn to experience a wider range of emotions
- Develop greater empathy
- Develop expanded ability for caring and compassion
- Enjoy the benefits of a life long connection to children
- Experience greater health, income and satisfaction over span of life



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Focus on Fathers and Co-Parenting

- Identify programs that have the greatest potential to grow.
- Hold monthly case reviews with father focus.
- Develop Resource Guide to use with families.
- Use Reflective Supervision to highlight father involvement and role that dad can play.



Evidence Driven

- Developed individual program goals
- During first six months of model, two thirds of programs tripled their rate of fathers on visits.
- Discovered dads were often not counted even when they participated in visits.
- Developed statewide benchmarks.



Next Steps

- Continue to shift home visitors' beliefs toward co-parenting.
- Develop more precision resource materials to address home visitor needs.
- Build stronger collaboration between home visiting programs and DV and BIP providers.

